3:Stone E-5 (1945) 1949
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Boruca

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

423 648 **Land Tenure.** The *Boruca* consider the territory in which they live as the property of the tribe at large. Legally, the Costa Rican Government has not yet made a reservation of this section. This is due, perhaps, to the relative remoteness of the area from the towns of the central plateau, and to the very broken nature of the terrain. It may also be [609] partly the result of the hostile attitude of the *Boruca* to any stranger desiring to settle amongst them. No non-Indian has property in this region.

423 311 Each family has from three to five *manzanas* for their own use, often as far as a league (3 miles) from the village. This is their "farm," and is worked continuously until the soil runs out, then a new spot is selected, and the forest cleared to start again. The village, as a whole, 423 has a *manzana* for cultivation for the church. 794 Each individual is required to do his share of [476] work on this land. The Indians go in groups to clear the field and to plant it with corn, rice, beans, and sugar cane. Formerly the church had cattle, but this situation no longer exists in Boruca. When the crops are gathered, they are stored in a special room in the parish house to be kept for the use of the priest on [735] his bi-yearly visits, or for the poor when the farming year is bad. Unfortunately, nowadays, this custom is slowly disappearing.

423 311 It is said that up to only a few years ago, the town also had its field, and that there were no individual small farms as there are today. The great number of barren hills which are commonly called "savannas," and which clearly retain the vestiges of former tilled rows (see fig. 10, *e*), serve as silent proof of the authenticity of this tradition, as well as to the Spanish reports of the great number of Indians who inhabited this region at the time of the Conquest. The savannas today are of particular importance to the *Boruca*. Economically, these savannas furnish the roof of the house (see p. 12), and the food for the few animals which these Indians possess. Besides this, they yield a grass that is considered necessary to use in the bath of the new-born child (see p. 20), and a grass which is often used to make *maracas* (see p. 29). Consequently, no one is allowed to fence off the

6:Stone E-5 (1956-1959)1962

[P. 35(A)]

SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri
Cabecar

765 [273] 782 [825] is often made and is drunk at the burial place during the ceremony. Pittier[118] records the

[Text continues TOP of P. 35(B)—Qualyst]

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

614 [616] **The Clans.** The Bribri and the Cabécares are divided into matrilineal clans which developed from moieties. Although a number of clans have disappeared through war and sickness, those which remain strictly follow the ancient rules. This emphasizes the non-marriageable 582 position of all the mother's relatives. A vestige 614 of cross-cousin marriage exists but is not compulsory. One can marry the mother's brother's child but never the offspring of the maternal aunt. On the father's side, beyond the father's sister and the first cousins, one can marry whom one wants. The importance of 614 clan relationship is easily understood when 673 one takes into consideration the moral code of these peoples. According to this there are three great sins which are placed in the following order:

1) To have sexual relations with own clan.
[825] 2) To allow an animal to suffer when wounded instead of killing it rapidly.
[224] 3) To kill a man. (This may be the influence of the [177] Roman Catholic Church and the government of Costa Rica.)

582 614 The need to adhere to clan regulations in regard to marriage is illustrated by the formation of new clans as a result of marriage outside of the tribe proper. This has become more [164] important because in the past 50 years many clans have died out due to measles and yellow fever epidemics, and the always present amoeba. In Salitre, for example, a new group has been formed which is known as *terú*. This started when a Bribri man belonging to the *uniwak* clan married a Térraba woman. The Cabécares are less inclined to form new divisions. Those who have inter-married with the [166] Bribri do not remain in Cabécar territory (*see* list of Bribri clans).

614 [423] [75] On the Caribbean side, clans are associated with given geographical sections (*see* Villages; Land Tenure). The land is owned by the complete group and the medicine man in

[118] Pittier, 1938, p. 26.
[119] Gabb, 1875, pp. 507–509.

765 sacrificing of a military macaw (*Ara militaris*)
782 over the grave.
825

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

614 certain clans still controls and keeps ritual
[423] property. This consists of drums or gold pre-
[756] Columbian figures (*see* Myths: *Clan Protec-*
[422] *tors*). Formerly the *usegLa* administered jus-
tice within the clan. Now the medicine man
[627] sometimes assumes this role although the most
[692] usual method is for the family of the culprit
to take matters into their own hands. In ex-
[681] treme cases such as a sexual offense within the
clan or murder, poison is given or the offender
[184] is buried alive. On the Pacific slope, land
[423] tenure by individual clans disappears. Three
or two groups, as the case may be, settle in
a given section such as Cabagra or China
Kichá, and own land as a single unit.

These people know, however, of their
[484] Talamancan counterparts and keep as a goal
[184] the idea of visiting, at least to know personally,
[422] the home site of their clan on the Caribbean
watershed. Clan-owned ritual property does
692 not appear on the Pacific. The family unit
on this side has been known to administer
justice, but this task is usually left to the Costa
Rican civil authorities in the nearest center.

614 Gabb does not seem to have considered the
[114] clans, rather he makes a distinction in social
565 classes,[116] indicating the Cabécar *usegLa*, or
[793] high priest, as the spiritual head of both Bribri
and Cabécar, while the temporal ruler was
[643] Bribri. This lay head was known as the "King"
and tradition holds that there were two clans
of "Kings." These were not inter-marriageable.
Only one clan of these remains today (*see*
Non-Documental History of Talamanca). The
793 Indians recount that the most powerful indi-
692 vidual was the *usegLa* who spoke both Bribri
and Cabécar. It is said that complaints were
passed from the "King" to him for decisive
action. On such occasions, he retired to a
secret and sacred cave which had much *pita*
(*see* Fibers) at the entrance. There he had
sacred jaguars known as "dogs" and snakes at
his command. The last *usegLa* is supposed to
[164] have died from smallpox during the first half
of the 20th century. The clan of the *usegLa*
614 still exists, however, in the upper Coen, Tala-
199

601 tachiwa Mo Fa Fa
Fa Fa Fa
So So
So Da
Da So
Da Da

mikuwa Fa Mo Mo
Mo Mo Mo

423 **Land Tenure.** We have already noted that villages in the European sense are foreign to the Talamancans. The clan has a given area [614] for the use of their members. This involves a [241] river or creek (*see* Villages). The individual family plants in a different spot yearly within this territory (*see* Farming and Cultivated Foods). The Cabécares of the Pacific slope have begun to recognize land property. In [351] Ujarrás, fences are seen around vegetable and house gardens. The Bribri, however, have only demonstrated such tendencies in the vicinity of the school.

428 **Property.** The property understood as indi- [422] vidual and which can be handed down at death [423] pertains to personal effects and the house. When a man dies his property goes to his brothers and sisters. If he has a mother they go to his mother. When she dies they go to whomever she wants to leave them, a son, [178] daughter, etc. Today, however, everything [429] goes to the children—not to the wife. The wife remains as guardian for the children. When a man dies without leaving an adult son, his head wife receives everything, but she is obli- [736] gated to take care of the other wives until they remarry. The eldest son receives the greater portion, but all children have a share.

443 **Trade.** Markets were and are unknown among the Talamancan peoples. Trade was accomplished by itinerant groups or in areas set aside for this purpose. Products of the sea, 438 such as salt and *chaquira*, shell beads which [436] served as a medium of exchange, were important items in pre-Columbian times. Also in demand were gold, wild pigs, slaves, and cotton cloth.[140]

Certain vestiges of this custom remain. In fact, in the remote areas, and even in Salitre [437] and Ujarrás, articles are often traded and

[140] *See*, e.g., Fernández, 1886, vol. V.